

FACT SHEET: European Reassurance Initiative and Other U.S. Efforts in Support of NATO Allies and Partners

Since early March, the United States has taken action, both bilaterally and through NATO, to reassure allies of our solemn commitment to their security and territorial integrity as members of the NATO Alliance. A persistent U.S. air, land, and sea presence in the region, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, is a necessary and appropriate show of support to allies who have contributed robustly and bravely to Alliance operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere and who are now deeply concerned by Russia's occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea and other provocative actions in Ukraine. The United States stands by its allies, as they have stood by us. We will continue to take actions that increase the capability, readiness, and responsiveness of NATO forces to address any threat and that aid in deterring further destabilizing activities. That is why the President today called on Congress to support a European Reassurance Initiative of up to \$1 billion, which will enable us in the next year to undertake measures to:

- Increase exercises, training, and rotational presence across Europe but especially on the territory of our newer allies. Many of the U.S. air and ground forces participating in these activities would rotate from the United States.
- As we have done in Poland, deploy detachments of U.S. planners to augment the capability of our allies to design and host a broad range of training and exercise opportunities.
- Increase the responsiveness of U.S. forces to reinforce NATO by exploring initiatives such as the prepositioning of equipment and improvements to other reception facilities and infrastructure in Europe.
- Increase participation by the U.S. Navy in NATO naval force deployments, including more persistent deployments to the Black and Baltic seas.
- Build the partner capacity of close friends such as Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine so they can better work alongside the United States and NATO, as well as provide for their own defense.

This initiative will build on existing tools and authorities and will be included in the Department of Defense's FY 2015 Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) request to Congress.

In addition to this initiative, we are reviewing our force presence in Europe in light of the new security challenges on the continent. These efforts will not come at the expense of other defense priorities, such as our commitment to the Asia Pacific rebalance.

With current funding, the United States and NATO have already undertaken the following specific efforts, which are indicative of the types of activities we would seek to maintain and expand with the European Reassurance Initiative:

New U.S. Measures

- **Land Force Deployments:** In April, approximately 600 paratroopers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade deployed for training rotations in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland to enhance ongoing military-to-military relationships and demonstrate assurance of America's commitment to its NATO allies. These exercises are part of a series of expanded American land force training activities with European partners that are scheduled to take place over the next few months and beyond.
- **Maritime Deployments:**
 - In early April, the United States deployed the USS Donald Cook to the Black Sea, where the ship conducted operations to improve interoperability, increase readiness, and develop professional relationships with allies. The Donald Cook conducted presence operations and a port visit in Constanta, Romania, as well as an exercise with the Romanian Navy before departing the Black Sea on April 24.
 - From April 24 through May 12, the USS Taylor, the U.S. contribution to the Standing NATO Maritime Group, was deployed to the Black Sea, where she conducted bilateral operations with Romania and Georgia, including port visits to both countries.
 - The USS Vella Gulf entered the Black Sea May 23 to conduct operations to promote peace and stability in the region. Highlights to date include an exercise with the Turkish Navy, a port visit in Batumi, Georgia, and combined maritime training with allied naval forces.
- **Air Deployments:**
 - **Poland Aviation Detachment (AVDET) Training:** Quarterly rotations of military aircraft and airmen through the Aviation Detachment began in late 2012, and in March 2014 the United States augmented the rotations with additional F-16s and support airmen. These F-16s and airmen provide a persistent presence in Poland and enhance training and operability with the Polish Air Force. Three C-130J aircraft deployed to Powidz Air Base, Poland, on March 31 as part of a regularly scheduled two-week AVDET rotation.
 - **Air-to-Air Refueling Missions:** Since mid-March, the United States has been flying refueling missions in support of NATO Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) flights over Poland and Romania.

- **Open Skies Treaty Flight:** On March 14 the United States conducted -- at Ukraine's request -- an Open Skies observation mission over Ukraine.

Preplanned but Enhanced U.S. Measures

- **The USS Truxtun** entered the Black Sea through the Turkish Straits on March 7 to conduct port calls in Constanta, Romania, and conduct an exercise with Romanian and Bulgarian naval forces. The Truxtun's stay in the Black Sea was extended so that she could visit the Port of Varna, Bulgaria, to hold an onboard maritime planning conference with Bulgarian and Romanian officers and conduct a second exercise.
- **NATO Air Policing:** On March 6, the United States deployed an additional six F-15Cs to augment the four F-15Cs already in Lithuania filling a NATO peacetime requirement to have quick reaction interceptor aircraft "ramp-ready" for a four-month period to ensure the integrity of the airspace above Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The U.S. rotation began in January and ended in early May. Poland, with augmentation from the United Kingdom, France, and Denmark, took over the air policing task in the Baltic region, and Canada deployed aircraft to augment NATO air policing in Southeast Europe.

United States Ongoing/Steady State Measures

- **U.S. Force Presence:** There are approximately 67,000 service members in Europe. Approximately 57,000 active duty service members are assigned to U.S. European Command, and approximately 10,000 support other organizations, such as U.S. Africa Command.
- **NATO Response Force (NRF) Commitment:** The United States has pledged several thousand service members to the NRF, including a brigade combat team from the Texas-based 1st Cavalry Division, a hospital ship, air-to-air refueling tankers, and escort ships.
- **Army Rotational Forces:** The United States sends a battalion-sized unit from the United States to Europe twice a year for up to two months per rotation. One of these battalions recently participated in NRF exercise ROCHAMBEAU in France and is currently participating in U.S. European Command-hosted multinational exercise COMBINED RESOLVE II. Additionally, elements of the unit participated in NATO Exercise STEADFAST JAZZ this past November.
- **Missile Defense / European Phased Adaptive Approach:** The U.S. contribution to European missile defense, whose aim is to protect against emerging threats from outside of the Euro-Atlantic area, includes a missile defense radar in Turkey, plans

for four Aegis destroyers to be forward deployed in Rota, Spain (the first, the USS Donald Cook, arrived in February), and two planned Aegis Ashore sites -- one in Romania (2015) and one in Poland (2018).

- **Black Sea Rotational Forces (BSRF):** This force, based out of Mihail Kogalniceanu (MK) Air Base, Romania, includes 250 Marines and sailors tasked with maintaining positive relations with partner nations, enhancing regional stability, and increasing interoperability while providing the capability for rapid crisis response in the Black Sea, Balkan, and Caucasus regions. In May, BSRF personnel participated in exercise PLATINUM LYNX, an infantry field training with the Romanian military to enhance familiarity and interoperability between U.S. and Romanian forces. Additional U.S. forces in Romania not associated with the BSRF include:
 - 500 U.S. troops permanently stationed at MK Air Base conducting transit center operations; and
 - 175 U.S. Marines temporarily based out of MK Air Base as part of the Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF). The SPMAGTF is postured to respond to a broad range of military operations in Africa and Europe, including fixed-site security, non-combatant evacuation operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel, theater security cooperation, and other missions as directed.
- **Exercises in the Baltic Sea and Poland:** The United States sent U.S. Marines from the Black Sea Rotational Force to the Baltics this April to participate in exercise SUMMER SHIELD. U.S. forces participated in exercises NAMEJS and FLAMING SWORD in Latvia and Lithuania, respectively, in May and are participating in multilateral exercises BALTOPS and SABER STRIKE in the Baltic region in June. The United States will also deploy 18 F-16CJs and one KC-135 tanker to Łask Air Base, Poland, concurrent with the SABER STRIKE and BALTOPS exercise. BALTOPS is an annual, multinational maritime exercise focusing on interoperability, maritime security, and cooperation among Baltic Sea regional partners. SABER STRIKE is an annual, multinational ground and air exercise focused on enhancing interoperability among U.S. Army units and the land forces of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

NATO Measures

- **Revised Planning:** NATO is updating its defense plans and is developing a readiness action plan that includes a review of joint exercises, threat assessments, intelligence-sharing arrangements, early-warning procedures, and crisis response planning.

- **Support to Ukraine:** On March 5, NATO allies decided on a number of measures to intensify NATO's partnership with Ukraine and strengthen cooperation to support democratic reforms. Measures included an increased engagement with the Ukrainian civilian and military leadership; strengthened efforts to build the capacity of the Ukrainian military, including with more joint training and exercises; and increased efforts to include Ukraine in multinational projects to develop capabilities.
- **Suspension of NATO-Russia Council (NRC) Activities:** At an NRC meeting in April, NATO Foreign Ministers condemned Russian military intervention in Ukraine and suspended staff-level civilian and military meetings with Russia. Ambassadorial-level meetings of the NRC will continue.
- **New Air and Sea deployments:**
 - **AWACS:** On March 10, the North Atlantic Council approved establishing AWACS orbits over Poland and Romania to enhance NATO's situational awareness of activities in the region and to reassure NATO allies. These aircraft will only fly over NATO territory and will come from the NATO fleet and allied contributions.
 - **Standing Naval Forces:** In late April, NATO activated Standing NATO Mine Counter-Measures Group One and sent it to patrol the Baltic Sea. The group, which consists of six ships from Belgium, Estonia, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, and Poland, is conducting port visits and participated in an annual mine clearance operation (NATO naval exercise OPEN SPIRIT 2014). On May 12, NATO tasked its augmented Standing NATO Maritime Group One to perform maritime assurance measures alongside counter-terrorism patrols in the eastern Mediterranean. The group includes five ships from Canada, Germany, Norway, Turkey, and the United States.
- **New Exercises:** NATO launched a large-scale exercise, STEADFAST JAVELIN 1, in Estonia on May 16, which tested allied forces on their ability to work together as well as maintaining NATO's readiness and combat effectiveness. The exercise reflects NATO's strong commitment to collective defense in the Baltic region. Around 6,000 troops from Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States participated in the exercise which finished on May 23. Many participants were already in Estonia taking part in the annual Estonian-led KEVADTORM14 exercise that began on May 5 and that was merged into the NATO-led event.